

Cane Toad Update

August 2005

Issue 5



NORTHERN HABITAT



48 hours in the field with Frogwatch

We have just returned from an 8 day road trip from Broome to Darwin and return where the highlight (or perhaps the lowlight) was 48 hours in the field with thousands of toads at Ringwood Station, one hour south of Darwin. This is where Frogwatch are undertaking several trapping trials and we were able to see first hand the success of the traps that they have developed.

The two billabongs in the trial demonstrate the success of the traps with the infestation in the dam where three traps are installed being 64% less than the billabong situated only 3kms away where no traps are in place.

Graeme Sawyer took us to many beautiful billabongs by day which looked tranquil but when we returned to inspect them later in the evening they were infested, in some cases, with hundreds of toads.

This has confirmed to us the need to fully understand that these pests need to be monitored after dark and any surveillance work being conducted by CALM or other agencies should be well into evening hours.

Toads are generally not active during the day at this time of year and it is virtually impossible to detect toads as they are well hidden or sheltered under logs, thickets of grass, rocks, ledges, tree roots or in domestic environments under houses and in at least a dozen other places that homes provide for shelter.

They come out after dark and only need a patch of mud or slightly damp soil or sand to re-hydrate their bodies. When knowing what to look for toads are easy to detect at night time. They are not particularly active at this time and are easy to catch and kill. Toads are like other feral animals and a range of strategies should be used to kill them including shooting, poisoning, trapping—the object is simple—eradicate them using everything available.



Pictures:

TOP: One of the traps at the trial billabong at Ringwood Station (note shade and solar system).

SECOND: Russell and Graeme emptying one of the traps.

THIRD: The second trap at the trial billabong—chock full of toads.

FOURTH: A happy toad buster. Russell and a bag of Bufo ready for humane disposal.

Disappointment at lack of signage and information

As part of our road trip we inspected all of the major 24 hour road stops between Broome and Katherine expecting some form of signage notifying travelers about the risks and dangers associated with cane toads and the need to be 'checking your load for toads'. We were of the understanding that some of the initially granted \$600,000 was going to be contributed toward some form of public awareness but we have not seen any results along the highway. We were particularly disappointed that there was absolutely no information available at the Victoria River and Timber Creek Roadhouses where we expected at least some form of written information to be distributed. There was nothing!

We have formally advised CALM and the Ministers office about our observations and are hoping that the signage problems will be overcome immediately as apparently a tender to supply and erect has been let.



Plenty of signage, but no references between Katherine and Broome for the need to be on the lookout for cane toads.

Set Your Traps Properly

HAVE TRAP, WILL CATCH!

Not quite.

Once you have purchased your trap or installed it at your business there are a few things you need to do. The trap pictured is a bad example of how a trap can be set up that is not really toad friendly, or inviting.

Traps work at night by the use of a UV light which attract insects and therefore attract hungry toads. The light needs to be in a position that will attract insects, and toads, into the middle of the trap (in other words concentrate the light into the trap), and ultimately should be battery/solar powered so that they don't rely on a person having to turn on a switch. Toads will push their way in through the one way door for a feed at night. Once in the trap these pests (that did not ask to come to Australia) should be provided with water and shelter to ensure their survival before they are humanely and quickly disposed of—not left to dehydrate in the harsh top end environment. A good idea is to partly cover the rear of the trap with shade cloth or roof insulation (see Frogwatch trap). Also make sure the entry doors are cleaned regularly—toad saliva attracts dirt and dust!

Your trap should be situated in a suitable location. Underneath power pole lights or near damp patches of a dripping tap (i.e. near ablution facilities for a caravan park) or an area that will be naturally attractive to toads. During the dry season they will be near remnant water (contact us or Frogwatch if you would like info on your trap setup).



Traps should be set up with shelter for the caught toads. Chunky bits of wood bark, or half pvc pipe will provide shelter. Water should also be provided in shallow dishes. The traps can also be partly covered to protect from sun in the daylight.

WA Government Commits!

Most of you will have seen lots of toad talk in the news recently. Environment Minister Judy Edwards flew to Kununurra to spend time in and around Vic River and Timber Creek, which was shortly thereafter followed by an announcement by Geoff Gallop of another \$1 million to the WA campaign. The great news is that \$500,000 of this will be given to the Stop the Toad Foundation! We have asked Barry Haase to support our calls for the Federal Minister to honor his gov'ts financial support promises of last year (12 months ago!) and match the state govt commitments. We would expect an answer to Barry's letter in the near future from Ian Campbell.

Thanks



Thanks to Graeme Sawyer at Frogwatch for taking the time to host us recently in the Northern Territory. It was an eye opener and we seriously recommend you contact Graeme if you'd like to spend some time in the field studying toads. Whilst at Ringwood Station we were treated to a fine demonstration of 'amplexus' at one of the billabongs where mating calls and doubling up was in full swing. In some cases four or five toads had attached themselves in 'amplexus' to a female toad. Frogwatch research suggests that generally males hover around the waters edge and the females avoid it where possible, preferring to hang back a little further into the bush habitat. No wonder, an innocent hop to the water to re-hydrate will most likely result in four or five horny toads climbing on her back in the hope of a successful mating. This also presents a great opportunity to eradicate multiple breeding toads.



**This newsletter is produced by Russell Gueho and Vanessa Hayden
from Northern Habitat in Broome.**

Any contributions are welcome.

We are happy to provide free images of toads for newsletters, websites or projects.

Please contact 08 9192 5275 or email northernhabitat@westnet.com.au

For more information on cane toads please go to

www.stopthetoad.com.au

www.canetoads.com.au

www.frogwatch.org.au